



Sister Sanctuary in China Installs Mooring Buoys

In 1981, Key Largo National Marine Sanctuary staff designed and installed the first mooring buoy in the Key Largo area. Today, this mooring buoy system is used throughout the Florida Keys and all over the world to protect coral reefs from anchor damage. Over the years, Sanctuary staff have trained others in the techniques of mooring buoy installation.

Earlier this year, Sanctuary Resource Manager John Halas and Team Ocean Education Specialist Amy Massey were invited to China to work with resource biologists in planning and installing a system of mooring buoys in the Sanya Coral Reef Reserve, "sister" Sanctuary to the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. At the conclusion of the trip, the team had succeeded in placing the first six mooring buoys and three additional anchor eyes in the Reserve.

During the past few years, resource biologists and managers from China have spent time in the Florida Keys learning about Sanctuary management, including law enforcement, education, resource protection, damage assessment, reef restoration, and mapping techniques. In addition, Sanctuary educators have traveled to China to facilitate workshops on planning for environmental education and ecotourism programs.

These visits are part of an ongoing exchange between the two sister Sanctuaries, which began with a cooperative agreement signed in 1998 between National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the State Oceanic Administration (SOA) of China's State and Technology Commission. The agreement was established to facilitate mutually beneficial cooperation between marine protected areas in both countries. Protected areas for mangroves, corals and wetlands were selected in each country based on similar physical features and environmental challenges. The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary was selected as a sister sanctuary to the Sanya Reserve because both have extensive coral reef ecosystems and share similar ecological concerns. Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve was paired with the Shankou Mangrove Ecosystem Nature Reserve. Projects between the two involve mangrove restoration, water quality monitoring, and development of an ecotourism plan. The Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve's sister Sanctuary is the Tianjin Paleocoastal and Wetland Nature Reserve, because the two share an interest in protecting and restoring wetlands. The original basis for the cooperative agreement between NOAA and SOA is the Marine and Fisheries Protocol of the 1979 U.S.-China Science and Technology Agreement.



FKNMS staff John Halas and Amy Massey and Sanya Coral Reef Reserve Manager Mr. Shi Fu with mooring buoys for the Sanya Coral Reef Reserve.

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